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Scary Thoughts and Anxiety

A subscriber to the Panic Attack Recovery Newsletter submitted a detailed question for answering in a subsequent installment so I have summarized it in a way not to be too revealing but yet revealing enough that I can give a clear response.

Here we go. This subscriber had a panic attack and is now having very scary thoughts of hurting someone and other scary thoughts about things

Matthew's Response

Obviously it is important to consult a psychologist when one is having thoughts like this or the overall panic attacks and anxiety that is connected to them.

However these types of thoughts are more typical - than many probably think - for sufferers of anxiety and panic attacks; even though many sufferers would not necessarily want to admit these thoughts to their closest of friends.

These fears could be of going crazy, the fear that you're going to hurt someone or even thoughts of dying or committing suicide.

To be clear however: I'm not suggesting that the sufferer actually is going to do any of these things just that they have anxious thoughts about these things. Sufferers do not act on these thoughts as someone with a severe mental disorder might – they just become incredibly anxious about them.

One example of an above mentioned fear / scary thought could be someone who has a fear of knives, in other words someone whose fear about knives is that they might hurt someone. Again, not that they actually want to hurt someone or intend to do so but rather they just experience a feeling of anxiety around the thought of knives.

You may recall in a previous installment that I discussed the fact that after one has a panic attack they become incredibly anxious and very often his/her mind starts to go the "dark side".

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In other words he/she starts to see many things in a much more negative light than prior to the onset of the first panic attack.

Again, it's important to recognize that this "dark side" thinking occurs for many panic attack sufferers on one level or another.

The problem is that while our mind is a wonderful and creative instrument, this wonderful and creative instrument unfortunately is capable of having a positive or negative influence on us.

Our mind is creatively able to keep us distracted from a problem that is really bothering us.

For example you might be in a job that you absolutely hate or you may have recently lost your job. These things would be examples of things that you really need to deal with – as opposed to the scary thoughts that your mind is generating.

However your thoughts are likely being taken over by more scary thoughts - like I've discussed above – so you can't address these real life problems.

Once you realize that you must get past these thoughts in order to really deal with the real problems in your life, you will be able to move forward.

So you need to get past these thoughts and write down some things that are really of concern to you – perhaps a relationship you're in, job you dislike, or other life problem. Often there are problems that are working in the background of your anxiety.

This is why it is so important to consistently use Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) on your scary thoughts. You have been exposed to the process multiple times throughout this newsletter.

You will be able to recognize the cognitive distortions present in your thinking and then generate more realistic thoughts that make you feel better. Then you're in a position to address the problems you really need to look at. Everyone has things in their lives that they need to address.

The good news is that you can use CBT to work on thoughts about these problems you experience and creatively produce alternative ways of dealing with the real life challenges that you and all of us face in day-to-day life. I would like to end by encouraging to use CBT over the weekend and do just that.

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